

Shortage of doctors inescapable: FSSAI chief

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E-Paper

The Chairperson of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), Rita Teotia, on Saturday expressed concern over the state of healthcare, highlighting shortage of doctors and large gaps in knowledge and quality, both in public and private sectors. Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel, who also spoke at the same event, acknowledged that “Gujarat, especially, has an acute shortage of doctors”

Speaking at a seminar on healthcare — “Shaping new paradigm in health and pharma sector” — at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit here on Saturday, Teotia, a Gujarat cadre IAS officer, said: “...shortage of medical doctors is quite inescapable. MCI (Medical Council of India) says India has 9.5 lakh practising doctors with 60,000 being added every year. But our current requirement (of doctors) is 16 lakh, and by 2030, we will require 30 lakh. This means that we not only have to double the (number of) undergraduate seats, but also to sharply enhance (number of) postgraduate seats. Moreover, we need faculty. We build institutions, but we don’t have teachers.” Her remarks came even as Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel, who holds the health portfolio, said that Gujarat has increased number of medical seats to 4,500 along and plans to establish new colleges for physiotherapy, paramedical services among others.

Teotia, however, acknowledged that “a lot of efforts are being made on the ground and we have seen systemic changes”. “While we do have regulatory regime for doctors and nurses, most other professionals are not regulated. One aspect that we need to look at is that unlike other countries, the capacity of nurses and paramedical services are often greater in healthcare here. This has not been adequately recognised,” she added.

Deputy CM Patel emphasised on the need for public-private partnerships (PPP) in the healthcare sector. “For providing quality treatment to 50 crore people added under Ayushman Bharat, we need resources, which the government is short of. Gujarat, especially, has an acute shortage of doctors. Until PMJAY was launched, no one was looking at the Indian healthcare to invest, but now that is going to change,” Patel said.



He claimed that due to initiatives taken by his government in Gujarat, the healthcare cost has dropped in the state. “The Gujarat government now has a scheme where knee replacement surgery, that otherwise costs in lakhs, will be done at a subsidised rate of Rs 40,000 per knee replacement surgery. We have a 1,200-bed civil hospital almost ready, a new kidney hospital is underway. We are also soon going to inaugurate a hospital dedicated for neonatal services. On Friday, the Indian government declared that Gujarat is leading the PMJAY programme with 2,700 empanelled hospitals, including government and private ones.” the Deputy CM said.

At the seminar, Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare, Ashwini Kumar Chaubey, praised the Gujarat government over its healthcare sector. “While the world looks towards India for healthcare, India is looking at Gujarat,” he said.